

AMS 3334: American Conflicts: The American Civil War Era

ISS 3713: War (Civil War)

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Term: Spring 2026
- 100% In-Person, 28 residential students
- MWF 1.55-2.45 pm
- Location CSE 429
- 3 Credits

Instructor

- Instructor: Dr Allen C. Guelzo
- Location: CSE 536
- Office hours: MWF 11.30-1.15
- Email: aguelzo@ufl.edu
- Phone: 352-273-3040

If you need to schedule an appointment outside of office hours, kindly email the course instructor.

Course Description

This multidisciplinary rotating topics course considers major American conflicts from the colonial era to the present. Courses will focus on one major conflict in American political, social, cultural and economic life.

Variable Topic

This multidisciplinary course introduces students to the history of the American Civil War Era (considered broadly, from 1820 to 1877). Not only does the Civil War contain all the elements of a national epic -- the war of brother against brother, the idealism of the anti-slavery movement, the dramatic intensity of battles, surrenders, and even assassination -- but its long-term legacies are still very much with us. The political and social struggles over which the Civil War was fought still await final resolution in our national life. This course will return

again and again to three themes which will act as bridges of concern, linking the Civil War past with today. One is the paradox of unity and disunity: the Civil War began to be fought to prevent secession from the Federal Union and ended up being a crusade to end slavery -- despite the fact that the Federal Constitution had guaranteed the integrity of the slave system to the very people who were attempting to disrupt the Federal Union. Another paradox is one which concerns the idea of freedom: the war guaranteed the end of slavery in America, but did it guarantee *freedom*? And in what sense? Lastly, we will understand that the Civil War was a struggle which occurred in places other than the battlefield.

Required Readings and Works

1. Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN-13: 978-0199843282
2. Digital Documents Reader (to be supplied electronically by the instructor and posted on Canvas)
3. Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. Hill and Wang; Revised and Updated edition (September 1, 2003). ISBN-13: 978-0809016303
4. Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850's*. Stanford University Press, 1962. ISBN-13: 978-0804701204
5. Earl Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*. University of Kansas Press, 1997 ISBN-13: 978-0700614219
6. Ira Berlin *et al*, *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. ISBN-13: 978-0521436922

Materials and Supplies Fees: N/A

Course Objectives

1. To explore the interpretation of the Civil War
2. To study the major questions and issues posed by the Civil War era
3. To examine major turning points in the course of the Civil War, and establish their long-term trajectories in American historical imagination
4. To understand the American Civil War in the international context of 19th-century warfare

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

1. **Active Participation and Attendance: 20%**

- a. **Participation: 10%** An exemplary participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class; consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion; and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below.
 - b. **Class Attendance: 10%** On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by $2/3$: an A– becomes a B, and so on. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is may be required for excused absences, per university policy.
2. **Outlines: 10%** You will prepare a working outline of not more than three pages of each of the four major texts assigned for this class (Kolchin, Fehrenbacher, Hess and Berlin), to be turned-in as indicated below. A sample outline will be posted on Canvas.
3. **Mid-Term Exam: 20%** An objective exam (multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, matching quotations, short-answer essay) based *on the in-class lecture material*.
4. **Map Quiz: 10%**

A map quiz will be administered at the start of class on January 23. You will have found posted on Canvas a listing of Civil War-related geographical points (rivers, cities, battle-sites) for both the eastern and western theaters of the Civil War, and you will be expected to identify those places, by matching names to geographical points on maps of the eastern and western theaters. You should use *Fateful Lightning* as a principal means of working-out those locations in advance.
5. **Final Paper: 20%**

The end-of-term paper (April 25, by 12 noon) will be a 3,000-wd essay based on your own essay question, which has been agreed upon with the professor. A list of potential topics will be provided on Canvas. The final version should be submitted at that time in Word (doc. or docx.) as an attachment to an e-mail directed to me at aguelzo@ufl.edu. The instructor will evaluate and provide written feedback on all the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. Students may want to access the university's Writing Studio. An additional writing guide website can be found at Purdue OWL.
6. **Final Exam: 20%** An objective exam (multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, matching quotations, short-answer essay) based *on the in-class lecture material*.

III. Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1 (JANUARY 12/14/16): CLASS INTRODUCTION – *The AMERICAN UNION*

In this week's sessions, we will begin by reviewing the course syllabus, with its assignments and expectations. When we will then turn to the fundamental question of the course itself: what caused the Civil War? No one among the Founders expected anything so cataclysmic – a dissolution, perhaps, but not a continent-wide armed struggle. We will consider the complexity of the war's cause by borrowing from Aristotle's four-fold notion of *cause*.

Readings (157 pages):

1. *Fateful Lightning*, 3-23
2. Kolchin, *American Slavery*, chapters 1, 3-6
3. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ Virginia & Kentucky Resolutions
 - ✓ The Northwest Ordinance
 - ✓ Daniel Webster, Second Debate with Hayne

WEEK 2 (JANUARY 21/23): SLAVERY & ABOLITION

In this week, we will seek to understand how an Enlightenment republic found itself harboring a labor system like human slavery, and how it became associated with a single region of the United States and with a single race of human beings. We will also consider the origins of opposition to slavery, the fear of slave insurrection which possessed the minds of many, and conclude with a map quiz to promote your familiarity of the geography of the Civil War era.

Readings (56 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 23-53
2. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*
 - ✓ James Henry Hammond, Mud-Sill Speech
 - ✓ David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*
 - ✓ William Lloyd Garrison, *The Liberator*
 - ✓ The Confessions of Nat Turner
 - ✓ American Anti-Slavery Society, Declaration of Sentiments

Assignment: Map Quiz in class (January 23)

WEEK 3 (JANUARY 26/28/30): COMPROMISE & DISUNION

In this week we will examine how confrontation and division over slavery began to wreak political havoc in the republic as early as 1819 and the controversy over the admission of Missouri to the American Union, how that controversy flared up anew after the Mexican War of 1846-48, and how to erupted yet again in its most insidious form in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.

Readings (34 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 54-82
2. Digital Documents Reader, 26-32
 - ✓ The Missouri Compromise
 - ✓ The Wilmot Proviso
 - ✓ Daniel Webster, "Seventh of March Speech"
 - ✓ The Fugitive Slave Act 1850
 - ✓ The Kansas-Nebraska Bill
 - ✓ "The Appeal of the Independent Democrats"
 - ✓ Charles Sumner, "The Crime Against Kansas"

Assignment: Turn in Kolchin outline (January 26)

WEEK 4 (FEBRUARY 2/4/6): DRED SCOTT & ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In this week we will discover how the federal judiciary attempted to intervene in the slavery question in the *Dred Scott* case of 1857, and how, far from settling matters, only inflamed them more. We will also take careful note of the emergence, after 1854 of the major opponent of slavery, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, rose to national notice through his campaign against Stephen Douglas in 1858, and how different was the ground Lincoln occupied from that of another anti-slavery partisan, John Brown.

Readings (153 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 54-82
2. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness*, chapters 3-7
3. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, "House Divided Speech"
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, Seventh Debate with Stephen A. Douglas
 - ✓ John Brown's Speech
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, "Cooper Union Address"

WEEKS 5 & 6 (FEBRUARY 9/16/18/20): *The SUMTER CRISIS & The PICTURE BOOK WAR*

During this combined session week, we will examine in detail the actual mechanism which, after the Civil War, induced the Southern states to attempt a secession from the Union, and how the newly-elected president, Lincoln, acted to oppose that secession, even as that opposition forced matters over the line into civil war.

Readings (106 pages over two weeks):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 82-172
2. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ South Carolina Secession Ordinance
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural,
 - ✓ Jefferson Davis Inaugural
 - ✓ Alexander Stephens, “The Cornerstone Speech”
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, War Proclamation & G.O. No. 15
 - ✓ W.H. Russell, *My Diary North and South*
 - ✓ George B. McClellan, “General Plan of Operations & Plan of Operations for the Peninsula Campaign”
 - ✓ Gen. Robert E. Lee, Special Orders 191

Assignment: Turn in Fehrenbacher outline, February 18

WEEK 7 (FEBRUARY 23/25/27): EMANCIPATION & *The War on the Border*

Lincoln fully expected that the war would force a halt to the expansion of slavery and put the nation on the road to its gradual abolition. But by 1862, the method he was forced to choose was an unprecedented use of presidential ‘war powers,’ in the form of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Readings (108 pages):

1. Berlin, *Slaves No More*, first essay
2. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 172-200
3. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ Benjamin Butler and the Contrabands
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, “To Orville H. Browning”
 - ✓ Second Confiscation Act, July 17, 1862
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, “To Horace Greeley”
 - ✓ Salmon P. Chase, Diary entry for September 22, 1862
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation
 - ✓ Frederick Douglass on Abraham Lincoln

Assignment: Mid-term Exam, February 23

WEEK 8 (MARCH 2/4/6): *From SHILOH to VICKSBURG*

This is the week in which we will begin to see the Civil War expand across the vast spaces of the West, which in 1862 meant ‘everything on the far side of the Appalachians,’ and especially the Mississippi River valley. Reclaiming and re-opening the Mississippi river was a necessity for the Lincoln administration, and he was able to accomplish this by 1863 through the unheralded talents of Ulysses Grant and the U.S. Navy.

Readings (130 pages):

1. Hess, *The Union Soldier* chs. 3-8
2. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 200-213
3. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ Ulysses Grant, “The Confederate Attack on Shiloh” & “The Battle of Shiloh”
 - ✓ Ambrose Bierce, “What I Saw of Shiloh”

WEEK 9 (MARCH 9/11/13): POLITICIANS & SOLDIERS

The Civil War was, of course, a war, and so much of what we say about it concerns its military campaigns. But the war also created a new environment for domestic policies and questions, especially concerning economics and civil liberties.

Readings (73 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 213-77
2. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ Roger B. Taney, *Ex parte Merryman*
 - ✓ Legal Tender Act
 - ✓ *Prize Cases*
 - ✓ *Ex parte Milligan*
 - ✓ Whitman, *Specimen Days*, Chs 26 & Ch 65
 - ✓ Frank Wilkeson, *Recollections*, Ch 11
 - ✓ David Thompson, “With Burnside at Antietam”

Assignment: Turn in Hess outline, March 11

March 14-22 Spring Break

WEEK10 (MARCH 23/25/27): *The WATCHERS OVERSEAS*

The leaders of the Confederacy were well aware that the United States won its independence in the American Revolution largely through the assistance and intervention of a foreign nation, France. They hoped that foreign intervention might do likewise for them; consequently, the Lincoln administration labored intensively to ensure that the major European powers, principally Great Britain and France, did not do so. But there were moments when international incidents and aristocratic sympathy with the Confederacy nearly brought that about.

Readings (62 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 278-313
2. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ R.M.T. Hunter, “The Capture of Mason and Slidell”
 - ✓ Sir Garnet Wolseley, “A Month’s Visit to the Confederate Headquarters”
 - ✓ James Russell Soley, “The Union and Confederate Navies”
 - ✓ John Taylor Wood, “The Fight of the First Iron-clads”
 - ✓ Report of Capt. Van Brunt, USS *Minnesota*
 - ✓ The Declaration of Paris (1856)
 - ✓ John McIntosh Kell, “Cruise and Combats of the *Alabama*”

WEEK 11 (MARCH 30/APRIL 1/3): ADVANCE *into the* CONFEDERATE HEARTLAND

Finally, with the fall of Vicksburg in the West, Union armies there could begin an important drive from the Ohio river south-eastwards to the vital Confederate center at Atlanta. As this offensive gained momentum, Lincoln gave a memorable and hopeful address at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg in November 1863 which set out his understanding of what the war could achieve if pushed to a successful conclusion.

Readings (143 pages):

1. Berlin, *Slaves No More*, second essay
2. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 325-356
3. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ Ulysses Grant, "The Battle of Chattanooga"
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

WEEK 12 (APRIL 6/8/10): *The WAR at HOME*

The Civil War had to be waged on many fronts, not the least of which was at home, where the war created new stresses and new opportunities, in terms of race, gender and class, and especially in the war-torn Confederacy, where dislocation and disorientation mingled with opportunity and novelty, not all of it welcome.

Readings (137 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 313-324, 356-417
2. Berlin, *Slaves No More*, third essay
3. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ Edward Pollard, *Life of Jefferson Davis and the Secret History of the Confederacy*
 - ✓ Mary Boykin Chestnut, *A Diary from Dixie*

WEEK 13 (APRIL 13/15): TO ATLANTA *and the SEA*

The capture of Atlanta by Union forces under Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman not only ensured the successful re-election of Abraham Lincoln as president but opened a way for a Union army to march, almost unopposed, across Georgia and up through the Carolinas.

Readings (53 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 418-464
2. Digital Documents Reader
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, “Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction”
 - ✓ The Wade-Davis Bill
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, “To James C. Conkling”
 - ✓ Ulysses Grant, “Preparing for the Campaigns of ‘64”
 - ✓ Frank Wilkeson, “The Battle of the Wilderness”
 - ✓ Ulysses Grant, “The Battle of Cold Harbor”

Assignment: Turn in ALL THREE Berlin outlines, April 15

WEEK 14 (APRIL 17/20): *The PASSING of the DEAD*

Substitute Day APRIL 22

Sherman's successes in Georgia and the Carolinas were not, at first, matched by Ulysses Grant's offensive against the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. But by 1864, the Confederacy had grown too weak to fend off either Grant or Sherman, and in the spring of 1865, the two major Confederate field armies, under Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston, were forced to capitulate, and the major campaigns of the war came to a close. Not, however, before an assassin murdered Abraham Lincoln, and brought down confusion on the postwar settlement whose consequences last to this day.

Readings (86 pages):

1. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning*, 465-536
2. Digital Documents Reader. 127-142
 - ✓ 13th Amendment to the Constitution
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, "Response to a Serenade"
 - ✓ Horace Porter, "The Surrender at Appomattox Court House" & Terms of Lee's Surrender
 - ✓ Abraham Lincoln, "Last Public Address"
 - ✓ Andrew Johnson, Amnesty Proclamation
 - ✓ Laws in Relation to Freedmen ("Black Codes")
 - ✓ 14th & 15th Amendments to the Constitution
 - ✓ "Why the Confederacy Failed"
 - ✓ Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days*, Ch 101

Reading Days (April 23-24)

Assignment: Final Exam (April 25-May 1): tba

IV. Grading Scale and Rubrics

Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see [here](#).

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A–	90 – 93%		C–	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B–	80 – 83%		D–	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubrics

Participation Rubric

A (90-100%)	Comes to class with pre-prepared questions about the readings. Engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others and consistently elevates the level of discussion.
B (80-89%)	Does not always come to class with pre-prepared questions about the reading. Waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.
C (70-79%)	Attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion. Is only adequately prepared for discussion.
D (60-69%)	Fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion. Is not frequent participant in discussion.
E (<60%)	Attends class infrequently and is wholly unprepared for discussion. Does not participate in discussion.

Examination Rubric: Essays and Short Answers

	Completeness	Analysis	Evidence	Writing
A (90-100%)	Shows a thorough understanding of the question. Addresses all aspects of the question completely.	Analyses, evaluates, compares and/or contrasts issues and events with depth.	Incorporates pertinent and detailed information from both class discussions and assigned readings.	Presents all information clearly and concisely, in an organized manner.
B (80-89%)	Presents a general understanding of the question. Addresses most aspects of the question or	Analyses or evaluates issues and events, but not in any depth.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details but does not support all aspects of the task evenly.	Presents information fairly and evenly and may have minor organization problems.

	address all aspects incompletely.			
C (70-79%)	Shows a limited understanding of the question. Does not address most aspects of the question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating accurate, relevant facts.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but omits concrete examples, includes inaccurate information or does not support all aspects of task.	Lacks focus, somewhat interfering with comprehension.
D (60-69%)	Fails fully to answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating vague facts.	Does not incorporate information from class discussion and/or assigned readings.	Organizational problems prevent comprehension.
E (<60%)	Does not answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues.	Does not adduce any evidence.	Incomprehensible organization and prose.

Writing Rubric

	Thesis and Argumentation	Use of Sources	Organization	Grammar, mechanics and style
A (90-100%)	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	No errors.
B (80-89%)	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are incorporated but not contextualized significantly.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable.	A few errors.
C (70-79%)	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are mostly incorporated but are not properly contextualized.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable.	Some errors.
D (60-69%)	Thesis is vague and/or confused. Demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any	Primary and/or secondary texts are almost wholly absent.	Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear	Many errors.

	logical flow and does not utilize any source material.		conclusion, and the paper just ends.	
E (<60%)	There is neither a thesis nor any argument.	Primary and/or secondary texts are wholly absent.	The paper is wholly disorganized, lacking an introduction, conclusion or any logical coherence.	Numerous errors.

V. Required Policies

All academic policies in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found here: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>